DOCUMENT RESUME

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TITLE	Learning to Read through Reading.
INSTITUTION	Sierra Conservation Center, Jamestown, Calif.
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NOTE	6p.; See CS001934 for "Effective Reading Programs: Summaries of 222 Selected Programs"
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ABSTRACT

One of the twelve exemplary programs summarized in the Introduction to Right to Read's "Effective Reading Programs: Summaries of 222 Selected Programs" (CS001934), this program attempts to raise the reading skills of inmates of the Sierra Conservation Center to the level needed for training in conservation work while in prison, or for outside jobs after parole or release. The seven-week training session uses a reading-with-symbols method, giving the beginning reader visual cues to help identify the sound of a letter or a group of letters. Students first master consonant and vowel sounds from phonetic spelling lists, and as they proceed through the course to special reading books, the cuing with symbols is gradually reduced. The symbols enable the students to progress rapidly enough that they experience feelings of confidence and success in their reading. Students enter the program at the level at which they need work. The content of the program is designed to be of high interest to prisoners. (TO/AIR)

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PROGRAM AREA: Reading/Adult

PROJECT TITLE: Learning to Read through Reading

LOCATION: Sierra Conservation Center, Jamestown, California

SOURCES AND LEVEL OF FUNDING: State (pays instructor's salary) $18,000

PROGRAM START DATE: 1969

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

Goals and objectives: The program aims to raise the reading skills of inmates of the Sierra Conservation Center to the level needed for training in conservation work while in prison, or for outside jobs after parole or release.

Context. The program operates in the Sierra Conservation Center's academic school building. Participants include black, white, and Spanish-speaking inmates from poor, inner-city backgrounds. In addition to the difficulties presented by their socio-economic background and language variation, many of the prisoners have short attention spans and are impatient with regular academic procedures.

Program Description. The program has several major features:

- Use of "Reading with Symbols" reading materials
- Provision of individual learning carrels connected by earphones to instructor at console
- Provision of early reading gratification
- Use of read-along filmstrips and books and captioned full-length feature films
- Use of one-to-one ratio of oral instruction and evaluation

These features will be described in the appropriate sections.

Grade levels, years of operation, size--About 100 inmates with less than eighth-grade reading ability are enrolled in the program's 7-week training sessions. The program has operated for about four years.

Staffing, inservice training--For this number of participants the program staff includes 1 part-time administrator, 1 full-time certificated instructor, and 1 paraprofessional. The administrative officer connected with this reading program has had experience with other reading programs and is well acquainted with this particular program. He has, along with encouragement and counseling, secured needed equipment and materials and provided liaison with other officials and governmental departments. The instructors are chosen for their special ability to teach reading, their knowledge of audiovisual materials and techniques,

and their ability to encourage and motivate prisoner students. This year the instructor is on loan from a nearby high school. The paraprofessional (an inmate) should have similar abilities and, in addition to being energetic and adaptable, should have a pleasant voice for recording learning materials.

For each of these three types of personnel, a minimum of 12 hours of inservice training is needed. The administrator found it necessary to go more deeply into methods of budgeting and evaluation. Instructional personnel must be trained in the "Reading with Symbols" system and in the preparation and use of audiovisual materials.

Curricula, material, facilities--The "Reading with Symbols" method provides visual clues by which a beginning reader can tell the sound of a given letter or group of letters. The symbols are small pictures of objects familiar to workmen and having a masculine connotation. For example, the ch sound is represented by a chisel, the aw sound by a saw, and the short i sound by a one-inch section of a ruler. All or part of a word may be so keyed.

Thus, the word took would be represented by: t k. The circle around the oo sound indicates that it has the same vowel sound as that in hook, the word pictured above it.

A completely illiterate student is given a tape and chart explaining the symbol system. Then he starts on the consonant sounds at the beginning and end of words. He is given phonetic spelling lists to study and to learn. In each list the vowel sound is the same in all the words. When he has mastered the consonants, he goes on to vowel sounds, each with a pictorial symbol above it to indicate its pronunciation. The clueing with pictorial symbols is gradually reduced as the student proceeds through the course. With these aids, progress is rapid enough to give the student a feeling of success and accomplishment, and as soon as he has acquired some familiarity with both consonants and vowels he begins on the reading books which are specially constructed for the program. The early ones are in very large print to make recognition easier, to provide room for the symbols above the words, and to give the student a feeling of accomplishment for having read many pages at a single lesson. Students who already have some knowledge of reading are led to read quickly through the reading books until they reach a level at which they have difficulty.

Major items of equipment and material which are required for the program include these: "Reading with Symbols" books, cassette players, filmstrips and viewers, console (for instructor), individual earphones (for students) and recorded books.

The reading books are made up of stories of high interest, many of them containing elements of adventure, action, and sometimes catastrophe. Some of the contents deal with subjects of particular interest to prisoners, such as a discussion of the circumstances in which one can successfully plead self-defense.

Free-choice reading materials are provided in read-along form. The student reads while listening to a cassette tape. Preparation of tapes for the read-along materials is done at the project site. It has been

found that acceptability is increased if the voice of the reader matches the ethnicity of the materials; thus a black records the tape for African history. Full-length films, provided with captions, give further reading practice.

The classroom is arranged so that the instructor at the console can communicate with one, several, or all of the students, whose carrels are equipped with headsets. Any student can obtain assistance at any time by pushing a button, an action less damaging to the pride than the juvenile method of raising the hand. The carrels were built by the students themselves, both to save money and to given them a sense of personal involvement. The floor is carpeted to reduce noise. A language-laboratory preparation room has recently been added so that the recording of new materials will not take space from or disturb classroom activities.

Time involved--Each training session consists of 7 weeks. The student's school day is 7 hours long. Half of the day is spent on mathematics and half on reading. A student may be enrolled in consecutive training sessions to reach the eighth-grade level. Because of the fluidity of the population, there is no regular academic year. Part of the students' time is spent in formal instruction and part with the read-along tapes, books, and films. Frequent change of pace and activity is often necessary to hold the student's interest.

Cost. The cost of instructional materials for a class of 30 is $1000 for a 10-month year. This amount covers recurring costs for periodical subscriptions, consumables, and gradual replacement of books and materials. Start-up costs for recorded books, "Reading with Symbols" books, cassette players, filmstrips and viewers, and individual earphones amount to approximately $4450 for 30 students. The videotape recorder and the console are regarded as desirable but not essential. A playback videotape recorder costs about $795, and a camera and monitor to accompany it about $1200. A console, together with the costs of wiring and the additional cost of two-way headsets, would increase the start-up expenses by about $6,000, but the originators of the project feel that two-way communication is less important for reading than for mathematics.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS: (See attached section.)

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS:

Evaluation conducted by. Director of Special Services of Tuolumne County Schools Office and by project personnel.

Sample size and method. Data are available for four years of the program and include 325 treatment trainees. All convicted felons in the Center on the general education ability lists who read at grade placement of 5.0 or below, based on a Gates-McGinitie pretest, are selected for the program. Mean pretest for the September 1973-April 1974 trainees was a 2.49 grade equivalency. In previous years, the selection cut-off was at 7.0 grade level or below. Sample losses over the several years are less than 8%.

Measures. The Gates-McGinitie Reading Test is used for pre- and postmeasures. This test reports satisfactory alternate form reliabilities of .78-.89. Both vocabulary and comprehension measures were taken, but for most cohorts only a combined mean measure is available. Individual student pretest, posttest, and gain scores in grade equivalencies are available on all subjects.

Data collection. Students progress through the program in cohorts of approximately 20 trainees each. Each cohort is tested at the start and the completion of the 8-week (approximate) program. The tests are administered by the Special Services of Tuolumne County Schools for the program staff.

Data analysis. Descriptive statistics are means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics available are t-tests.

Changes in outcome and their reliability. Significant pre-post gains are revealed by t-tests in each year's data ($p < .01$). Grade placement gains averages for each of the four years raised from 13.9 to 20.6 months. The overall mean gain was 15.8 months. Gains have been consistent throughout the period of 1969-73.

Lack of a control group or expectancy plus a variable number of weeks exposure to the program make it impossible to form a rigorous evaluation. However, some samples of individual gains made by students in 1973-74 may be helpful to evaluate the effectiveness of this program. During the 1973-74 year, 49 students participated in the program for periods of time ranging from 1 week to 18 weeks, with the following data:

Pretest mean g.e.	2.49
Posttest mean g.e.	3.99
Combined S.D.	1.04
N	49

$t = 9.8$ ($p < .01$)

For students at the extremes in terms of amount of time exposed to the program, the following are examples of gain scores:

Number of Weeks in Program	Student Gains
18	4.5, 4.8
15	3.6
14	1.6, 1.0
13	1.6, 2.9
.	.
.	.
.	.
3	1.0, 1.0, 1.2
2	1.0, 1.0
1	.5, .2, .4

Educational significance. Functionally illiterate adults show significant reading gains in vocabulary and comprehension, averaging 1 1/2 years. Such gains are consistently shown by successive classes over a 4-year period.